Master

FEATURES

"Ruler of 600 Million -- and Alone," by Claire Sterling, New York Times Magazine, 10 August 1975

The attached article provides background information on the current situation in India -- especially relevant since the recent military coup in neighboring Bangladesh overthrowing Mujibur Rahman who, like Indira Gandhi, had become increasingly autocratic.

Widespread corruption, neglect of agricultural needs, and four years of drought contributed to the popular unrest which precipitated India's state of emergency. In Sterling's view these problems, combined with Gandhi's sense of mission, ruthless political acumen, and sheer tenacity, suggest a dangerous future for India: "the dynamics of staying on top may well push (Gandhi) into becoming a real dictator." More importantly, Gandhi's increasing dependence on pro-Moscow communists, her only source of support outside the enfeebled Congress Party, could move India into the Soviet orbit in Sterling's view.

The army remains the one group capable of stopping India's development into a police state. Traditionally apolitical and loyal to the state, it may one day intervene "to restore the institutions it has been drilled into defending since birth." The attached, for your background reading only, is intended to alert field personnel to a potentially volatile situation.

18 August 197

Ruler of 600 million— and alone

Indira Gandhi is unmaking a democracy 'to save it' and looking to exchange moral authority for bread.

By Claire Sterling

The news, flashed from New Delhi last June 12, made stunning headlines around the globe. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of what was then the world's biggest democracy — India has nearly 600 million people, a seventh of the human race — had been found guilty of corrupt electoral practices by the High Court of Allahabad, and would have to step down.

She didn't step down, and India isn't exactly a democracy any more.

Indeed, Mrs. Gandhi didn't even wait for the Supreme Court to hear and rule on her appeal before arresting upwards of 3,000 people, including all major opposition leaders and 30 or 40 from her own Congress party (but not the pro-Moscow Communists, who praised her "firm action" as "long overdue"); imposing rigid press censorship; suspending constitutional rights, and proclaiming, on June 26, a state of emergency giving her full dictatorial powers. "There is a higher court than the High Courts, and Indira Gandhi is not a mere Prime Minister," said a newspaper close to her.

She herself claimed she did it "to save democracy," and hoped the emergency would "not last long." But the clockwork precision of her crackdown suggests that it must have been planned well in advance; and it seems plain from her brutal performance that her countrymen are going to have to put up a stiff fight for their freedom if they want it back again.

There was supreme irony in the verdict of that upright judge in Allahabad who brought the crisis to a head. Of all the opposition charges hurled against Mrs. Gandhi, accused among other things of turning India into a sink of corruption, the charge that finally tripped her up was simply that she had used somebody on the Government payroll to manage her election campaign. When she did that, in 1971, she needn't have bothered. At that dazzling zenith of her career, she could have romped home in any election without help from anyone. Not now, though. Her decline from popular grace began long before the Allahabad court ordered her to resign. If she has dumped constitutional government rather than obey the order, it isn't because she was "indispensable to India," as her Congress party claimed, but because too many Indians seemed all too ready to dispense with her.

The fact is that Mrs. Gandhi had a chance rarely given to any national leader in our time to change the face of her immense, tormented, poverty-stricken country, and she muffed it. In the train of her failure, the demoralization spreading across India has been so profound that it is hopeless to attribute it to any single cause. Drought, floods, famine, starvation, punishing inflation, economic stagnation, black marketing, colossal corruption and "one of the most dramatic erosions in living standards ever experienced," as The Economist of London called it, have been part of it, but not all. What has made the whole bigger than its parts has been a "collapse of moral authority," according to a distinguished Indian editor, George Verghese—"a failure of leadership that has bred cynicism, frustration, indiscipline, anger, violence, visible signs of disintegration and enveloping chaos."

These are strong words from a man who had long been at Mrs. Gandhi's side as press counselor and personal friend. Yet, traveling around the country not long before the crisis broke, I found them borne out at every turn. From Bombay in the west to Calcutta in the east, from Trivandrum in the south to the "rice bowl" of Madhya Pradesh and the "breadbasket" of the Punjab in the north, I heard nothing but bitter complaints. Gujarat, where Mrs. Gandhi's Congress Party took a calamitous beating in local elections on the very day of her court conviction, had been paralyzed throughout the previous year by strikes, sit-ins and popular demonstrations against rocketing food costs and blatant graft in high places. Bombay, when I was there, was averaging 24 mass public protests *a day*. Calcutta, where one in every five people can find no work at all, was more mutinous still. Bihar's jails were literally overflowing (into schools, parks, zoos) with 70,000 political prisoners. About half were left-wing Naxalite terrorists; the rest were peaceful followers of Mrs. Gandhi's implacable adversary, Jaya Prakash Narayan, a saintly 72-year-old intellectual who in recent years had become the principal articulator of the country's desperation and the first real threat to Mrs. Gandhi's power.

Claire Sterling, who writes for The Atlantic Monthly, The Washington Post and The International Herald Tribune, returned recently from India.

He is now among those jailed. Much of the unrest in India is the product of three years of relentless, catastrophic drought. But there is nothing supernatural about the forces of corruption that have emptied the shelves of the Government's Fair Price Shops (at which food and household essentials are rationed at fixed official prices); diverted rice to the black market, (where its price has shot up 300 per cent); closed an eye to these and every other illicit financial operation so as to collect "black money" for election campaigns; let the poor go poorer, the hungry go hungrier, the youth go jobless, the small farmers go under while big landlords flourish. Resigned as they are to such timeless afflictions, India's impoverished masses have given signs of a growing feeling that this time "she" is to blame.

When they speak of Mrs. Gandhi as "she" nowadays, it is not always with their old affection. Still, when she declared that "the Indian people have known me since my childhood" (in the same speech in which she proclaimed the state of emergency), the claim was fair. They remember her as the granddaughter of hard-as-nails Motilal Nehru, one of the founders of India's Congress movement, — which brought independence from the British; as the daughter of deft, charismatic Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister after independence; as the little girl who sat on the knee of Mahatma Gandhi, the lay saint of India, and as a pupil of the venerated national poet Rabindranath Tagore.

Indira was a lonely child; both her parents spent more time in jail than out, fighting British colonial rule. Her grandmother used to lament to her that it was all occurring in expiation of the lofty, élite Nehru family's past transgressions. Her mother, the beautiful but frail Kamala, too was given to interludes of soul-searching, even mysticism—hers inspired by the disdain with which the more high-born and better-educated Nehru clan treated her. Much later, after her beloved mother's death of tuberculosis in Switzerland, Indira said, "I saw her being hurt, and I was determined not to be hurt."

Mother and daughter often prayed together, and to this day Indira reveres holy men and frequents shrines, though she claims to be a scientific-minded radical Socialist like her father. After her mother's death, she became sickly herself, but gamely studied on in Switzerland and at Oxford. Not until the outbreak of World War II did she return to India for medical care. Going back with her was a fellow Indian student, a budding lawyer named Feroze Gandhi. (Neither he nor she is related to Mahatma Gandhi.) They were married in 1942, but drifted apart after about 10 years.

In 1947, when Nehru became Prime Minister, Indira moved in with her widowed father in Delhi. There, as his official hostess, she assumed the role of his closest political confidant and became a power in her father's Congress party, the machine that to this day dominates the Indian political scene. As president of the party, she came to know its leaders first-hand, and from her father she began to learn how to manipulate them. She learned, among other things, that the party's main role was to garner votes in elections and that, in furtherance of this end, it was necessary to tolerate a certain amount of corruption, even to help cover it. As for the real power, she was taught by Nehru that it belonged in the Prime Minister's hands.

This was the woman, then, still shy, still a bit irresolute, not yet deeply experienced, that the party bosses picked as their Prime Minister two years after Nehru's death. They agreed on the choice because they believed Indira would be a cinch to push around. Goongi Gudiya, the Dumb Doll, they called her in those days, never dreaming they would live to regret it.

At first, Goongi Gudiya played along. She had to, for the party was at a low ebb, scarcely able to cling to its long-accustomed majority in the Parliament. In 1969, three years after she became Prime Minister, she even seemed complaisant when the party bosses moved to displace her. They earmarked for the office of president a man opposed to Indira Gandhi, clearly planning to have him appoint a new Prime Minister at the first opportunity. Transparent as was the plot, Indira Gandhi seemed to accept her fate, and even filed the papers for her camouflaged adversary's nomination to the Presidency. At the same time, she was secretly operating in a circle of deception inside that of the party leaders, emplacing her own people in the party machine. One day, suddenly, she moved. From that day to the next, she threw her support to a Presidential candidate not beholden to the bosses and mounted a campaign in his support that left the old party leaders reeling.

Her man won in a landslide, and, in the 1971 general elections, she won an unprecedented two-thirds majority in Parliament. Her next opportunity came with the Pakistani Government's harsh crackdown on the Bengali autonomy movement in East Pakistan and the resultant flood of Bengali refugees into India. Seeming for months to disregard domestic calls for intervention, she waited masterfully for the right moment and struck with the $2-billion in arms she had obtained from the Soviet Union. It was a *blitzkrieg*, a soaring victory that led to the creation of the independent state of Bangladesh, a reduction of Pakistan to subordinate status on the subcontinent — and another triumph at the ballot box. In the 1972 state elections she swept all but two of the 21 states.

Next came the annexation, without so much as by-your-leave, of defenseless Sikkim, a tiny, sovereign border princedom. Then came a satellite launched into space. Then a nuclear test explosion. "The only *man* in India," was the verdict of her grateful and proud people.

The trouble was that although she delivered so much in political, military and prestige terms, she had promised ever so much more in matters of economic betterment—nothing less than *Garibi Hatao*, the abolition of poverty. Yet, under the rule that Indira Gandhi persisted in calling Socialist, the rich continued to be pampered; only 1,700 of them in all of India declared taxable incomes of more than $1,300 last year. In 1971, the year she pledged to abolish poverty, some 220 million of her countrymen were living on 20 cents a day or less. Today, the number has swelled to 385 million, nearly two-thirds of the population. With each succeeding year since she made that vow, more and more Indians have been slipping below the officially computed poverty line —in effect, starvation line— of 15 cents a day.

And grumbling more and more. Not even her consummate grandstanding in the arena of world politics could any longer deflect the vital concern of the Indian public about the effects of the drought. It had become too big, too hurtful, ravaging the country's grain crops while water itself was running desperately short.

Nobody knows how many Indians have starved to death in this fourth famine year. In the countryside, especially, members of Parliament have testified to "horrible" famine conditions. One local Congress party official who toured 40 villages in Madhya Pradesh found that nine in every 10 families did not have a grain of wheat or rice and were living on wild fruit. Others have told of people driven by hunger to suicide, or eating grass and roots. In the Cooch Behar region of West Bengal, there are reports of people eating their own dead children. The Government has released no figures on deaths by starvation; nor, if it did, would they be likely to include those too undernourished to resist the mildest illness. "When a weak old man died after waiting in a queue for hours under a hot sun to get his food ration, the police said he died of sunstroke," says the Bombay editor of The Times of India.

Ajit Bhattacharjea. Is that an accurate statistic?"

Nevertheless, there are plenty of statistics to show how much poorer India's poor are getting. The current five-year plan estimates that not until 1980 will the bottom fifth of the population (about 120 million now, about 190 million by then) be eating as much as they did in 1960. Meanwhile, the average Indian, who used to consume 480 grams of food grains a day in the early nineteen-sixties, is down to 418 grams a day, while his consumption of meat has dropped from three kilos a year to less than two. Three-quarters of the Indian people have no assured work and earn less than $50 a year; nearly half earn less than $40 a year, and per capita income has been falling steadily for the last three years in a row. Thirty million adult Indians are unemployed; rural unemployment has risen 600 per cent in the past two decades; and unemployment among the educated is increasing by 20 per cent a year: Of the 16 million youths who graduated from Indian colleges in 1974, one in three cannot find a job of any kind.

Meeting her for the first time, you'd never believe she was a decision-maker. The woman waiting serenely at her uncluttered desk when I came to see her last winter in Delhi's *Lok Sabha* (national Parliament) was unexpectedly small, delicate and feminine. The stark white streak in her short black hair seemed more a touch of elegance than a token of her 57 years. Her voice was soft, and her glance often strayed with a glint of humor to the deferential aide hovering at her elbow, for the statistics she told me she could never keep in her head. She dismissed, as uninteresting or unimportant, my suggestion that she must occasionally feel crushed by the weight of her moral authority. "What can you do with moral authority?" she asked, with a small, amused smile.

The rest of the interview she kept on that same level plane: detached, patiently evasive, the sheathed sword: For example, when I asked her how she viewed the nation's economic problems and the Government's ability to cope with them, she answered, "Surely we have problems, but many are due to causes beyond our control, like the weather. Most others are of a passing nature, inevitable in the growth process." "In any case," she said with utter confidence, "India will certainly manage to keep up in its food production with the growth in population, and we will be getting out of our economic troubles soon." When I asked her how she planned to achieve this, she went on to speak of something else.

While conceding that "in some cases we are not as efficient as we should be," she evidently considered that a minor obstacle. The big problem, as she saw it, was that "certain opponents are getting in the Government's way by taking political advantage of our economic difficulties in the name of democracy"—a pointed thrust at her increasingly troublesome opponent, J. P. Narayan. In fact, she appeared to believe, or wanted me to believe, that such troublesome opposition was the one thing "preventing" her Government from "solving India's food problems right away." When I observed that she was being accused of trying to suppress the opposition—if only to get on with the solution of such urgent problems—she replied in that soft voice, "It is the responsibility of the ruling party not to suppress the opposition." Adding, still softly, "Of course, it is also the responsibility of the opposition not to obstruct the functioning of the Government."

That is her style. Most of the several hundred people passing through her office daily do all the talking, while she listens, or doesn't, without comment. Many a reporter has gone through the ordeal of an interview with the Prime Minister when, not caring for their questions, she has sat in stony silence as though the questions had never been asked. A high international official told me that, after calling at her invitation, he had tried to make conversation for 20 minutes and finally left, without her having once lifted her head from the letters she was signing, still less uttering a word to him. The tacit message of her behavior is that the Prime Minister is there to dispose, not discuss, especially a Prime Minister who is a Nehru, the scion of India's founding family.

And so, though she can rightfully claim that all of India has known her since childhood, it is also true that, outside her innermost family circle of two sons, an Italian daughter-in-law and two grandchildren, nobody really knows her. Described as a "very private person" or a "haughty Kashmiri Brahmin," depending on who does the describing, she holds almost all her closest collaborators at arm's length.

One day when Indira was an adolescent, according to her latest biographer, Krishan Bhatia, an aunt saw her standing at the window, gazing out over the garden of the family residence, her eyes burning with passion. Asked what she was thinking of, she said she was dreaming of Joan of Arc. It seems that from childhood her greatest ambition was to become the Joan of India, and from the time she first became active in the Congress party, the model of the superheroine of world politics has dominated her feelings about her own role. And, for a while, as Prime Minister, her vision of herself, holding high the emblem of Socialism as she led her people into battle against the tyranny of poverty, was shared by a good part of the country. She is still a larger-than-life heroine to millions of Indians, especially in the countryside, but from a daughter of the people she has evolved into India's most adroit and ruthless politician. "My father was a saint who strayed into politics . . . but I am not of the same stuff," she has said of herself, while Henry Kissinger said of her, "The lady is cold-blooded and tough." How tough, she demonstrated last week. Today, many might say, her claim to visionary leadership has been succeeded by an assertion of dictatorial authority, her Joan-of-Arc mission replaced by the mission of staying in power.

The way she now runs the country, every Cabinet minister, party functionary or other high office-holder knows he holds his job solely at her pleasure. In the 18 states (all but three) now under the party's control, every chief minister has been handpicked by her. None has had his own local power base. None has dared to decide anything of importance without consulting her: During his first 666 days in office as Chief Minister of West Bengal, Siddhartha Sankar Ray spent 306 days in the national capital, mostly in Mrs. Gandhi's waiting room. And none has had to worry much about his personal future, provided he showed undeviating loyalty to the Prime Minister and could produce at election time.

Naturally, producing at election time is no simple matter anywhere. Among a Congress party politician's heaver duties has been the collection of undeclared "black money" — from businessmen, black marketeers, hoarders, smugglers and assorted tax dodgers — for financing election campaigns. The sums thus collected (or extorted, some say) have run into many millions, with estimates going as high as $26-million for last year's election in Mrs. Gandhi's home state of Uttar Pradesh. Nationwide, says Krishan Bhatia, the Congress party itself has become "one of the biggest hoarders of undeclared cash in the country."

Provided an appointee of Mrs. Gandhi's can produce in that sense, he can generally count on her protection, however grossly inefficient he may be at anything else, beyond his own enrichment. Time and again, she has shielded national and state officials with egregious records of corruption. Among a few random examples are a former Chief Minister of Orissa who accepted $100,000 from bidi-leaf traders for favors rendered; the Punjab's Minister of Agriculture, for-

mally accused of setting up commercial private farms on lands set aside for redistribution to the Untouchables; three ministers of the Madhya Pradesh government charged with misappropriating $3-million of the $4-million allocated for "scarcity relief operations" in the state; and the use by the Revenue Minister of Andhra Pradesh of vast state resources for his daughter's 10-day wedding celebration, including official cars, guest houses, furniture, state-employed servants and huge quantities of ghee, rice, vegetables and fruit meant for religious pilgrims but impounded to feed the minister's 10,000 guests.

None of these cases can hold a candle, of course, to the one involving Mrs. Gandhi's 24-year-old son Sanjay, entrusted several years ago with $40-million and 300 acres of choice real estate to turn out a small Maruti car, for which he has yet to produce the prototype. The cumulative effect of all these scandals has been devastating. "Indira . . . has failed her country in many more ways than her response to the economic disasters wrought by war and capricious monsoons," writes Krishan Bhatia. "Her years of power have witnessed a distressing debasement of political values, a staggering increase in corruption at all levels, including the top, callous misuse of authority and a sharp decline in administrative efficiency."

What kept her popular among the masses was a brilliantly intuitive sense of the political master stroke. The greatest of these, perhaps, was the nationalization of the banks in 1969. The move had nothing to do with ideology. Locked in battle for control of the party, she seized on the issue to pose as a champion of the poor seeking to free the party of its reactionary old guard. For weeks afterward, her house was thronged with the capital's humblest citizens —ricksha pullers, petty traders, junior clerks—bearing garlands of flowers. Though the nationalized banks promptly went into the red and stayed there, she never lost that radiant humanitarian image. "At that moment," observed a veteran Western European diplomat, "Mrs. Gandhi may not have known precisely what a bank was, and she certainly didn't know what nationalization was, but she knew it was time to do it."

Judged by results, her economic record can only be called dismal. Mostly, it has consisted of Socialist experimentation. On paper, the country's industrial capacity ranks ninth in the world. But its public sector industries, on the average, are working at less than half of capacity, steel mills at 40 per cent, electrical power plants at 35 per cent; and nearly a third of all the capital invested for development has been wasted on idle plant and equipment. The resulting shortages, blockages, bottlenecks and breakdowns in practically every vital sector — coal, steel, railroad transport, fertilizer and food distribution, electric power— are maddening and incalculably costly. Production of essential consumer necessities keeps dropping, while television sets, air-conditioners, cosmetics, crockery, detergents, chocolates and talcum powder choke the market. Medicines are desperately short, cooking oil is adulterated past edibility, and the country produces just enough cotton cloth for 12 yards of cotton per person per year in statistical terms—enough for two saris for the average Indian woman, who wears this form of dress throughout the year.

The most damning indictment of Socialism, Indian style, however, has been the Government's "colossal apathy toward and appalling neglect of agriculture," says former Planning Director B. S. Minhas. He and other experts claim that India, even with her mushrooming population, ought to be able to feed herself. Yet, with much more of her arable land under cultivation than any other country, she is getting much lower yields than her Asian neighbors. China, for instance, is feeding her 800 million people, notwithstanding droughts, floods and other acts of God; India is still importing food to fill the gap between production and consumption, even at the shockingly low consumption level.

There was a time, from 1951 to 1973, when this gap was made up by 92 million tons of free or concessional food grains from abroad, mostly from the United States. (American aid to India in all forms has exceeded $10-billion since independence in 1947.) That made it pretty simple to keep up an industrial growth rate of 8 per cent—until Indira Gandhi decided she didn't want or need foreign food aid any more.

Mrs. Gandhi's proud announcement to that effect in 1971 was made in a moment of euphoria never attained before, or since. The previous year's monsoons had been marvelous, and she had a sensational crop of 108 million tons. In 1972, however, the rains failed disastrously, worse than in any year that anyone could remember. The harvest was some 10 million tons below the previous year's. It was then that Indira Gandhi launched a crash program aimed at increasing wheat production by a third and more than doubling the summer rice crop, all in a single year. This was to be done by bringing 20 per cent more acreage under cultivation and providing special farm credits, more fertilizer, high-yield seeds, pesticides, tube wells, pumpsets and extra electric power.

It was an incredible supposition, a Socialist planner's pipe dream. India hadn't a prayer of procuring even half the fertilizer needed, still less the indicated quantities of seeds, pesticides, cement and drilling rigs. Perpetual and worsening power failures made it useless to provide new electrical pumpsets or even to "energize" old ones. The "input shortages" alone would have ruled out achieving anything near the projected gains—which, to have any chance of success, would have had to be planned at least two years ahead. On top of that, India was faced with an accelerating breakdown in ransport, services and power, and with the irresistible temptations for local government officials to juggle with such an unexpected bonanza in money supply. By 1973, the misuse of Government funds for this or anything else was so widespread and so taken for granted that most observers assume that 20 or 30 of every 100 rupees spent on the program went into kickbacks in one form or another.

Still, the central Government kept handing out the money, while local administrators enthusiastically reported overfulfillment of their agricultural goals. They did so with the use of what the Russians would call "ceiling statistics"—a phrase coined in the early days of Soviet planning, when a collective farm manager, asked, say, how much livestock he had, would look up at the ceiling, scratch his neck and come up with a figure. A later report by India's Auditor-General revealed that not one of the 21 states had come remotely near meeting its targets. Although the 1973 summer rains were good, food grain output, far from rising by a projected 15 million tons, fell by 3.5 million tons below the previous year's. Having renounced food aid, India had to pay for what she got from abroad, and Mrs. Gandhi has had to spend up to $2-billion a year on food imports.

Ever since her election victory of four years ago, Indira Gandhi has had all the power she required to accomplish the radical changes that India needs in order to begin curing her profound debilities. Draft legislation for this has been available for some time, gathering dust in ministry files. Some of it is designed to redress the hopeless lot of the Indian peasant.

Under the land-reform law on the books, there has been redistribution—in name—of agricultural holdings. In actual fact, however, large landowners have managed to keep huge holdings by using members of their families and front names to put plots together. And although land values have risen fivefold since strains of "miracle grain" were introduced in the mid-sixties, the big owners have been able to find enough

cash and credit to expand their holdings. Meanwhile, more than two-thirds of India's rural population owns no land at all or, at best, less than five acres per family. Most in the second category are so heavily in debt to big landowners that they cannot really be called owners of their land. True land reform would cancel their indebtedness, make credits easily available to them, and effectively break up large and illegal holdings so that the small farmer could have his share. But the landlords oppose any such reform. And the Congress party depends more heavily on the big landowners than on any other single sector in the country. And Mrs. Gandhi depends on the party. Even a dictator needs a country-wide organization in order to assert control, and Mrs. Gandhi, not yet an outright dictator, remains beholden to her party as the only country-wide political organization in existence in India. She also needs it to keep up a facade of the constitutional government she claims to want to uphold.

Since making that claim and using it to justify imposition of the state of emergency, she has withdrawn more than ever into her private circle. Old advisers have disappeared, to be replaced by a handful of new ones, notably her young son Sanjay. She still rushes home every lunch to play with her two grandchildren, ever more the Oriental dowager, ever more closely drawn into the dynasty founded by grandfather Motilal Nehru. It is the sort of environment she is known to prefer in times of stress.

Yet her position could become intolerable at almost any time. Expressions of solidarity from the Congress party are all very well. The question is, what value to place on this support. It comes from a party, after all, set up to be of help to the Prime Minister mainly at election time. Indira Gandhi has deliberately kept it flabby in other respects, so that it would not get in her way—as her father did before her. When she needs people out in the streets on her behalf—and thousands were said to have been paid a dollar apiece to cheer her at mass rallies in New Delhi last June—only the pro-Moscow Communist party is in a position to turn them out.

A Communist party claiming a mere 350,000 members (more likely closer to 250,000) may look like a pretty weak reed in a nation of 600 million. Nevertheless, it has long provided Mrs. Gandhi with some of her most trusted advisers, ideological guidance in the pursuit of Socialism, and the capacity to mobilize street mobs at a moment's notice. This is not to say that Mrs. Gandhi necessarily *likes* the Indian Communists of the pro-Soviet variety, or even the Soviet Union, though Russia looms larger than any other state in her foreign relations. It does mean that she has some ideological affinity with both, in her marked preference for "Socialism" of some kind over capitalism of whatever kind, especially American.

Yet her relations with the Russians before the "emergency" weren't all that thick. Publicly, Mrs. Gandhi has never tired of pointing out how loyally the Soviet Union has supported India in crises like the Bangladesh war. She doesn't mention the fact that the Russians have given her no new economic credits since 1966. Nor that the renewed trade agreement with them for 1975 did not include the urgently needed petroleum, fertilizers, raw materials and wheat she had counted on—this compared to continuing aid from a Western consortium, including the United States, that has committed $1.4-billion to India this year.

Indira Gandhi is perhaps more powerful than ever before, but she is also more alone There is no one left to share with her the blame of the regime's failings, no one of any stature to partake with her in the task of running her vast, benighted nation.

So desperately isolated has she become, so driven into new repressions that cut off her line of retreat, that the dynamics of staying on top may well push her into becoming a real dictator. And, though she is not the woman to make India anyone's satellite if she can help it, her increasing dependence on Moscow and the Communists could send the country lurching into the Soviet orbit. Neither development is likely to leave the Indian Army unmoved. And that gets to what is perhaps the crux of the situation.

India's standing army of nearly a million men has been resolutely nonpolitical since independence. But it is also sensitive to the smallest slight on its honor, dignity and military independence, not to mention the nation's sovereignty; and it is steeped in loyalty to constitutional principles. It was altogether *her* army when she enjoyed unquestioned legitimacy of constitutional rule. It may not be, should its ranking officers conclude that she has become something else. More than ever now, her fate hangs on the army's continuing loyalty.

Somebody once told me, as I was traveling around India that the one thing worse than trying to govern the country by democratic persuasion would be trying to govern it by force. Yet that is how Mrs. Gandhi is trying to do it now. Depending on how fast and how far she goes in changing from a traditional Prime Minister to the one-woman ruler of a police state, the Indian Army—the one group with the power to stop the process—could intervene. If it were to do so, it would almost certainly be not to replace her with a military dictator but to restore the institutions it has been drilled into defending since birth. ■